

## **FIRST DAY ABSENCES POLICY PROPOSAL**

### **I. Issue**

Districts and charters are required to provide resources for all continuing and enrolled students from the first day classroom instruction is offered, whether an individual student is present or absent. These resources must be paid for by the schools. Since the obligation for these resources is incurred no later than the first day of classroom instruction, schools believe that they should be funded by the State of Arizona for the provision of these resources as of the first day of classroom instruction.

### **II. Facts/Impacts**

The Arizona Department of Education's (ADE's) policy has been to pay State equalizations assistance for students as of the first day that the student attends classroom instruction for the following reasons:

- To minimize the expenditure of taxpayer resources for students not receiving classroom instruction.
- To minimize the over-funding of students in concurrent enrollment status.

Register: A written record containing regular entries of items or details; a book or system of public records; a roster of qualified or available individuals.

ARS § 15-901(A)(10) – “Enrolled” or “enrollment” means that a pupil is currently registered in the school district.

ARS § 15-902(F) – A pupil is enrolled if the pupil is currently registered in the school district. In addition, the Uniform System of Financial Records (USFR) shall contain procedures to ensure that enrollment is determined by all school districts on a uniform basis. ARS § 15-183(E)(6) provides that, except as provided in the article, charter schools are subject to the same financial and electronic data submission requirements as a school district, including the USFR.

ARS § 15-901(A)(2) – “Average daily membership” (ADM) means the total enrollment of fractional students and full-time students, minus withdrawals, of each school day through the first one hundred days or two hundred days in session, as applicable, for the current year.

Continuing students – students enrolled through the end of the preceding school year, and not withdrawn

Pre-enrolled students – students who are not continuing students but who have registered to attend school in the district prior to the first day of classroom instruction of the current school year

### **III. Conclusion**

We believe that there should be a change in ADE's policy regarding first day absences. State equalization assistance provides schools with the ability to pay for resources necessary to educate students, e.g., land, buildings, utilities, teachers, administrators, furniture, computers, software, etc. These resources are necessary to educate students as a whole whether or not an individual student is present.

The implementation of the Student Accountability Information System (SAIS) has enabled the ADE to identify students in concurrent enrollment status. This greatly reduces over-funding caused by students registering in one school who may or may not be attending that school and/or who are enrolled in and attending another school or schools.

Therefore, we conclude that this change in policy would allow districts and charters to be more adequately funded.

### **Policy Statement**

For the purposes of determining Average Daily Membership (ADM) for a given school year at a given public school pursuant to ARS § 15-901 (A)(2), the first day of membership for continuing students or for pre-enrolled students shall be the first day that classroom instruction is offered. For all other students, the first day of membership for ADM purposes shall be the day of registration.

## **FIRST DAY ABSENCES**

### **ARIZONA EDUCATION STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURE AESOP #ADM001**

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#### **BACKGROUND:**

Arizona Revised Statute (ARS) does not provide a clear definition of how to handle cases where students are enrolled but are absent on the first day that school is in session. The nature of this question revolves around the notion of withdrawal of enrollment, and under what conditions it should occur. Historically, the Arizona Department of Education has interpreted that a student had to be physically in attendance on the first day of instruction or that student would have to be withdrawn from the enrollment. This policy was driven by the philosophical position that served two purposes: It minimized expenditures of taxpayer resources for students not receiving classroom instruction, and it reduced over-funding of students in concurrent enrollment status.

As recommended by the School Finance Advisory Committee, the Arizona Department of Education has established a new policy regulating the administration of students who are enrolled, but are not physically present in the classroom on the first day that instruction is offered. This change primarily affects the point at which membership for continuing or pre-enrolled students is recognized for the purpose of calculating Average Daily Membership (ADM). This change in policy attempts to recognize the costs for space, teachers and other resources that are incurred by educational entities when they prepare for pre-enrolled students. Those costs may not be reduced or eliminated simply because a student is not in attendance on the first session day. Costs for these resources are fixed in nature and are based on planned requirements that do not vary based on per capita attendance. Consequently, the Arizona Department of Education has concluded that public education agencies should be able to recover costs that result from planning and deploying resources for continuing and pre-enrolled students, provided that the student makes a physical appearance within a *reasonable* timeframe after instruction has begun. Otherwise, the student will be considered a “no show” and withdrawn retroactively to the first session day.

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

*Enrollment* – Meaning officially registered as a student of a particular school.

*Register* - A written record containing regular entries of items or details; a book or system of public records; a roster of qualified or available individuals.

*Continuing Student* – A student who was enrolled in an educational institution at the end of one school year, who is automatically carried-forward on the roster of that institution for the subsequent school year.

*Pre-enrolled Student* – A student who was not enrolled in a given educational institution at the end of the previous year, but does enroll in that institution prior to its first official session day.

*Average Daily Membership (or ADM)* – The total enrollment of fractional students and full-time students, minus withdrawals, of each school day through the first one hundred days or two hundred days in session, as applicable, for the current year.

## First Day Absences

### Procedure

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*Reasonable* – The Arizona Department of Education interprets the term *reasonable timeframe* as ten (10) days based on the number of consecutive days of unexcused absence prescribed in ARS §15-901(C)(2) before a student is withdrawn.

### **PROCEDURE:**

There are three (3) separate sets of conditions under which attendance process would have to be administered:

1. First day of classroom instruction
2. Days two through nine of classroom instruction
3. Day ten of Classroom Instruction

#### 1. First Day of Classroom Instruction

On the first day of classroom instruction, the class roster may consist of continuing and pre-enrolled students. Some students might enroll and others might withdraw on the first day as well. Recording the attendance for continuing, pre-enrolled, newly enrolled students, or students withdrawing that are in attendance on the first day of classroom instruction will not be affected by this policy change. They will be marked *present*, *tardy* or *withdrawn* as appropriate.

However, continuing and pre-enrolled students who are not physically present on the first day of classroom instruction will be marked *absent*, but will retain enrollment and will be submitted with the student accountability data. When the student arrives, the school will determine whether the absence is excused or unexcused. If the absence is excused, the student will have nine (9) more days within which to make a physical appearance in the classroom or he/she will be withdrawn as a “no show” retroactively to the first day of instruction and the ADM will be adjusted. If the absence is unexcused, the rule set forth in ARS § 901 (A) (2) will apply – ten (10) consecutive absences will result in a withdrawal to the last day of attendance. Excused and unexcused absences are virtually the same for the first ten (10) days of a session.

#### 2. Days Two Through Nine of Classroom Instruction

Students who were physically in attendance on the first day of instruction and are absent during the period from day two (2) through day nine (9) will no longer be subject to the “no show” withdrawal rule if their absences are excused as defined in the USFR and the USFRCS. However, students with ten (10) consecutive unexcused absences will be withdrawn retroactively back to the last day of attendance.

#### 3. Day Ten of Classroom Instruction

All students who were absent on the first session day and have not attended subsequent instructions, will be dropped as “no shows”.